

# **Planning Collaboration Initiative Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration**

## **SECOND ROUND – FEEDBACK ON DRAFT NATIONAL MOU**

### **Conference Call Summary for June 3, 4, 10, 11, and 17, 2003**

The second round of conference calls for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Planning Collaboration Initiative (PCI) began on June 3, 2003. Five conference calls were held during the weeks of June 2nd and June 16th to receive feedback from field planners on the draft National MOU. Robin Mayhew and David Kuehn of FHWA Headquarters and Vince Valdes of FTA Headquarters facilitated the discussions. Robin Smith of FHWA Headquarters and Terry Rosapep of FTA Headquarters also participated in the conference calls. Other members of the PCI Team who participated in the conference calls included Pete Butler from FTA Region 1 and Jesse Balleza from Region 6. Volpe Center staff involvement included Cassandra Allwell, Jeff Bryan, Esther Lee, and Kate Fichter.

Representatives from the following field offices participated in the first and second calls:

- FTA Region 3
- FTA Region 9
- FTA Region 10
- AK Division Office
- AL Division Office
- AZ Division Office
- FL Division Office
- GA Division Office
- MI Division Office
- MS Division Office
- NE Division Office
- PA Division Office
- TN Division Office
- Washington Metro Office
- Philadelphia Metro Office

This summary provides (1) a description of the issues and comments offered by the field offices on the draft National MOU, and (2) a summary of recommendations to consider in the revision of the draft National MOU.

#### **GENERAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE DRAFT NATIONAL MOU**

Conference call participants were generally satisfied with the draft National MOU. Many participants embraced the flexibility of the document, although one discussant mentioned the need for more explicit information on the specific mechanisms available for implementing local MOUs. Other concerns focused on the need for more resources to expand planning activities in the future. The ensuing discussion concluded with the clarification that the National MOU is intended to provide guidance on how FHWA and FTA can use mutual resources more effectively and the Attachment, a menu of potential options.

Another participant stated that additional topics need to be added to the list of the seven planning programs and products (page 1 of the draft National MOU), such as major projects, travel demand forecasting, ITS, safety, and Federal Lands. Participants agreed, however, that the National MOU should focus on the process of coordination and not on the substantive details of project planning. It was agreed that many of the substantive project items could be enfolded into

one of the seven planning programs and products already listed. For example, travel demand forecasting could be enfolded into the certification review process.

The call facilitators also noted that written comments are always welcome through the PCI website ([pci.volpe.dot.gov](http://pci.volpe.dot.gov)).

The revised MOU will be sent out to field staff prior to its final signature.

## **INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVE**

The following recommendations were made to the PCI Team for consideration in the revision of the “Introduction and Objective” section of the National MOU:

- Introduce FHWA and FTA in the first sentence of this section instead of the third; refer to FHWA and FTA thereafter.
- Add ITS to the “Congestion Management Systems” bullet on page 1 of the draft National MOU.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The conference call participants were satisfied with the content and organization of the “Guiding Principles” section. The following recommendation, however, was made to the PCI Team for consideration in the revision of the “Guiding Principles” section of the National MOU:

- Add guidance on conflict resolution strategies for potential situations that could arise between an FHWA Division office and an FTA Regional office.
- Add guidance on building local capacity, especially internal staff capacity.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The conference call participants asked for further clarification on the relationship between the National MOU and a field MOU. The PCI team clarified that the National MOU does not serve as a National mandate, but allows for local flexibility and the development of field MOUs.

The following recommendations were made to the PCI Team for consideration in the revision of the “Implementation” section of the National MOU:

- Provide availability of FHWA and FTA Headquarters staff to help facilitate the direct negotiations between FTA and FHWA field representatives when developing field MOUs.
- Develop a field MOU template that field staff can customize accordingly, and make the template accessible via the Internet.
- Delegate decision-making to the field level on how Metro offices should participate in the signature authority for a field MOU.
- Similarly, delegate decision-making to the field level on how multi-state metropolitan areas should be considered in the development and signature authority for a field MOU.
- Suggest the development of a field MOU for each FTA region rather than for each state. The regional field MOU could have similar Guiding Principles, but be slightly altered for each participating state.

## **EVALUATION**

The following recommendations were made to the PCI Team for consideration in the revision of

the “Evaluation” section of the National MOU

- Move the section so that it follows, instead of precedes, the “Implementation” section of the National MOU.
- Add a mechanism for analyzing project delays.

#### **ATTACHMENT**

Some concern was expressed over the role of the Attachment within the National MOU.

Participants agreed, however, that the menu of options served a valuable function as an optional list of suggested practices to be considered at the discretion of the field offices. For example, one participant was concerned that the option to delegate signature authority would eliminate the only opportunity that a counterpart agency may have to review and ensure the consideration of that agency’s goals. Participants agreed that the field MOU should establish the roles and responsibilities of the coordinating agencies, and that the responsibility to inform the other agency of decisions or actions remains, regardless of delegating signature authority.

The following recommendation was made to the PCI Team for consideration in the revision of the “Attachment” section of the National MOU:

- Conduct a customer service survey periodically. [Check with Connie Yu in Headquarters to identify representative activities on the west coast].
- Consider re-wording the mention of “established measures” in order to retain the sense of flexibility.

#### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following list restates the recommendations offered for consideration in the revision of the National MOU:

- Under the “Introduction and Objective” section:
  - Introduce FHWA and FTA in the first sentence of this section instead of the third; refer to FHWA and FTA thereafter.
  - Add ITS to “Congestion Management Systems” bullet on page 1 of the draft National MOU.
- Under the “Guiding Principles” section:
  - Add guidance on conflict resolution strategies for potential situations that could arise between an FHWA Division office and an FTA Regional office.
  - Add guidance on building local capacity, especially internal staff capacity.
- Under the “Implementation” section:
  - Provide availability of FHWA and FTA Headquarters staff to help facilitate the direct negotiations between FTA and FHWA field representatives when developing the field MOU.
  - Develop a field MOU template that the field can customize accordingly, and make the template accessible via the internet.
  - Delegate decision-making to the field level on how Metro offices should participate in the signature authority for a field MOU.
  - Similarly, delegate decision-making to the field level on how multi-state metropolitan areas should be considered in the development and signature authority for a field MOU.

- Suggest the development a field MOU for each FTA region rather than for each state. The regional MOU could have similar Guiding Principles, but slightly tweaked for each participating state.
- Under the “Attachment” section:
  - Conduct a customer service survey periodically.
- Under the “Evaluation” section:
  - Move the section so that it follows, instead of proceeds, the “Implementation” section of the National MOU.
  - Add a mechanism for analyzing project delays.
- Under the “Attachment”:
  - Consider re-wording the mention of “established measures” in order to retain the sense of flexibility.